Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

UN environment programme

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

through social forestry actions in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries

GOAL

Strengthen the evidence base for climate mitigation contributions of social forestry (SF) and facilitate its integration into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), with one result being improved access to climate finance.

ACTIVITIES

Five interlinked activities aim to create systems to monitor the climate change mitigation impact of SF, support sustainable investments in SF, and develop capacities to integrate SF into Nature-based Solutions and the Ecosystem-based Approach in Southeast Asia.

COUNTRIES

Works at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional level and in three pilot countries: Cambodia, Indonesia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

FAO and UNEP in collaboration with ASEAN bodies and other partners.

DURATION

Supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the project runs from 2022 to 2025.

WHY SOCIAL FORESTRY

Forests in Southeast Asia provide unique and wide-ranging benefits, from global to landscape levels. These are reflected in their prominence in, among other things, the NDCs of many ASEAN Member States (AMS). Social forestry is increasingly understood, both at the ASEAN and AMS levels, as a vital approach to achieving sustainable forest management, addressing deforestation and forest degradation, and supporting the achievement of NDCs.

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WHY THE UN-REDD SOCIAL FORESTRY INITIATIVE IS IMPORTANT FOR ASEAN MEMBER STATES

The value of social forestry in the region is increasingly recognized through legal reform, and government programs. This is reflected in the ambitious targets in terms of area for SF. For example, Cambodia aims to establish 2 million hectares of social forestry by 2029 (roughly a quarter of the nation's forest land). Indonesia has a target of 12.7 million hectares by 2030 (equivalent to the land area of Bangladesh). Meanwhile Lao People's Democratic Republic is developing an "Action Plan for the Recognition of Land Use Rights in Forestland in Lao People's Democratic Republic", which includes the target to issue land use certificates or land titles for the people who live and make a living in forestland and issue Village Forest Management and Protection Contracts for the 3 167 villages located in forest land by 2030.

The important role of forests climate action is recognized in countries in the region. At the 21st Annual Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Forest and Climate Change (AWG-FCC), one of the priority actions AMS recommended for the Plan of Action (PoA) on Forest and Climate Change (2026–2030) is to integrate forest-based mitigation and adaptation into NDCs, and AMS agreed to broaden the scope of the working group by addressing new emerging issues such as forest carbon markets, Nature-based Solutions (NbS), and Ecosystem-based Approaches (EbA).

The growing consideration of NbS / EbA for climate action reflects ASEAN's increasing awareness and capacity to use forests as effective nature-based and ecosystem-based solutions. The initiative supported this progress through the development of ASEAN Regional Guidelines and a Toolkit for integrating NbS and EbA into forestry, including social forestry; and exchanges such as the Regional Workshop on Supporting ASEAN Member States' Common Position on Forestry for UNFCCC COP 30.

The three pilot countries include social forestry in their NDCs, its relevance is evident. For example:

- Cambodia's detailed mitigation measures set out in its recently submitted NDC (2025) includes a target of 2 million ha under Community Forestry by 2029.
- Lao People's Democratic Republic's unconditional commitment (2020) states that "Emissions reductions will mainly be achieved through existing mitigation projects" including two initiatives that are directly supporting social forestry in the country (i.e. village forestry).
- Indonesia's most recent NDC (2025) refers to social forestry as part of its mitigation measures to the reduce emission from deforestation and forest degradation.

A key challenge is the lack of a mechanis [methodology] to measure the current and potential emission reductions from social forestry. Among other things, the initiative is collaborating with countries to address this fundamental gap.

In addition is important to understand the broader contribution of social forestry, and to ensure that it can benefit local communities, including by supporting them in accessing investments and climate finance.

THE INITIATIVE'S MAIN ACTIVITIES

The Initiative supports ASEAN Member States (AMS) strengthening capacities to assess the potential contribution of social forestry management schemes towards climate change mitigation, develop the required monitoring systems suitable to local contexts, and support access to finance for social forestry mitigation efforts.

This is being achieved through the following interlinked activity clusters:

DEVELOPING SYSTEMS AND STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES

Working in the pilot countries, fostering south-south cooperation and facilitating dialogues with the ASEAN working groups on social forestry and forest & climate change to develop systems and strengthen capacities to assess the current and potential contribution of social forestry to climate change mitigation.

MONITORING SOCIAL FORESTRY

Strengthening systems and building capacities to monitor social forestry in the three pilot countries.

INTEGRATING SOCIAL FORESTRY INTO CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS AND REPORTING

Developing the capacities to formally integrate social forestry into reporting on and updating of NDCs and related climate change mitigation programmes in the pilot countries.

PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENTS

Promoting and accelerating responsible private investments in social forestry.

OPERATIONALIZING NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Enhancing the capacities of AMS to quantify benefits and put into practice Nature-based Solutions and Ecosystem-based Approaches within the context of social forestry and developing ASEAN Guidelines and Toolkit on NbS and EbA in the Forestry Sector, including Social Forestry

INITIATIVE'S PARTNERS

In addition to working the ASEAN secretariat, the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) and the ASEAN Working Group on Forest and Climate Change (AWG-FCC), and with the governments of Cambodia, Indonesia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Initiative has also established working relationships with the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) from its inception, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) from Singapore, and the Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP).

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CONTACT US AND LEARN MORE

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